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The purpose of this study was to compare the tested intellectual abilities of Career Trainees who leave the Agency with those who remain as Career employees. Comparisons of this type can provide important clues to an organization's functioning and climate since these factors are reflected in the characteristics of individuals an organization can attract and retain. Specifically, the guiding question of this study was "are male CTs who leave the Agency higher, lower, or no different in intellectual ability from those who remain?"

METHOD

Primarily because of changes in AES's test battery (PATB) over the years, it was decided to approach this study in two parts. Part I includes the first fifteen CT classes (July 1951 through Sept. 1958); Part II includes the next 20 CT classes (September 1959 through February 1967). Because of several changes in PATB between 1951 and 1958, as well as the relatively small number of persons in the first 15 CT classes, the conclusions arrived at in Part I are necessarily more tentative than those in Part II.

In Part I, approximately 154 male CTs on whom PATB results were available were studied. All individuals were selected who fell into one of three groups: those who left the Agency in their first year of employment (Quick Dropouts); those who left after five or more years (Slow Dropouts); and those who were still with the Agency as of June 30, 1967 (Stays).

A slightly different procedure was used to define the groups in Part II. Primarily because more individuals with test results were available,

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four groups were selected for study: those CTs who left in their first year of employment (Quick Dropouts); those who left after one or more years but who were still in training (Slow Dropouts A); those who left after one or more years after being assigned to jobs (Slow Dropouts B); and those who were still with the Agency as of June 30, 1967 (Stays). Primarily because of more systematic psychological testing of CTs since 1959, three-quarters of all CTs in the 20 CT classes between September 1959 and February 1967 were available for study in Part II. This is nearly double the proportion of CTs available from the first 15 CT classes.

RESULTS

Part I

Table 1 presents the mean test scores of the three groups in Part I. For seven of eight PATB tests, the mean scores of those who left in their first year of employment (Quick Dropouts) were higher than the mean scores of the Stays. For six of eight PATB tests, the mean scores of those who left after five years in the Agency (Slow Dropouts) were higher than the mean scores of the Stays. Primarily because of the small number of individuals in the Quick Dropout and Slow Dropout groups, only three of the mean differences obtained in Part I were statistically significant (very large differences are necessary to obtain statistical significance with small groups).

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Another way of looking at the data in Part I is in terms of the percentile equivalents of the mean scores of the various tests. Table 1 presents these percentile equivalents, which provide a method for understanding the magnitude of differences among groups. A percentile equivalent of a mean is a comparison of the mean (average) performance of each group with a common reference group -- in this case Agency professional males. For example, Table 1 shows that the average score of the 107 Stays on the Reading Comprehension test exceeds 77 per cent of Agency professionals, while the average score of the 23 Quick Dropouts on this test exceeds 84 per cent of Agency professionals and the average score of the 24 Slow Dropouts exceeds 88 per cent of Agency professionals.

In terms of the percentile equivalents of the means of the various PATB tests, Table 1 shows that the average test performance of the Stays on all PATB tests exceeds 64 per cent of Agency professionals. The average test performances of the Quick Dropout and Slow Dropout groups, however, exceed 70 and 71 per cent respectively of Agency professionals, a modest yet consistently better performance by those from the first 15 CT classes who chose to leave the Agency in comparison with those who remained.

Part II

Table 2 presents the mean test scores and the percentile equivalents of these mean scores for the four groups of CTs in CT classes 16 through 35. The Quick Dropouts were not superior to the Stays; in fact, their

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average test scores were lower than the Stays on seven of nine PATB tests. However, the mean test differences between the Stays and the Quick Dropouts were generally small and none were statistically significant.

A markedly different picture emerged for the Slow Dropout groups -- both those who left during the training and after assignment to Agency positions. In comparison with the Stays, those who left after one year but while they were still in training were superior on seven of nine PATB tests. Three of these differences were statistically significant.

Most noteworthy, however, were the differences in average test performance between the Stays and those who left the Agency after having received job assignments. On all nine PATB tests, the average scores of those CTs who left the Agency after having received their job assignments were superior to the average scores of those who remained; on eight of the nine tests, these differences were statistically significant. While the differences in ability between these two groups were only modest -- the average tested performance on all tests by the Stays exceeded 60 per cent of Agency professionals while the average test performance of those who left after assignment to jobs exceeded 69 per cent of Agency professionals -- those who left after receiving job assignments were clearly and consistently higher in those abilities measured by PATB than those who remained.

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DISCUSSION

Perhaps the most interesting contrast that can be made between Parts I and II of this study involves the Quick Dropouts -- those CTs who left within their first year of the CT Program. For the first 15 CT classes (July 1951 through September 1958), these Quick Dropouts were generally superior in overall intellectual ability to those who remained. However, for the next 20 CT classes (September 1959 through February 1967), individuals who left during their first year were slightly lower in overall intellectual ability than those who remained. This apparent change in the caliber of persons lost during their first year of training since 1959 could be interpreted to mean that the CT Program has changed in recent years in such a way as to better hold the interest and involvement of the brighter trainees. However, the data from the more recent CT classes also illustrate that those CTs who leave after one year but while they are still in training are superior in average intellectual ability to those who remain. Thus any generalization about possible changes in the CTP over the years which has led to the retention of brighter individuals must be restricted to the first year of training. Furthermore, it should be remembered that influences other than the Career Training Program per se (e.g., perception of the assignment system, interim assignments, discussions with non-CTs, salary, job opportunities outside the Agency) may induce a CT to stay with or leave the Agency. In short, it would be risky to directly attribute the apparent change in the caliber of CTs lost during their first year of training to changes in the CTP.

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The factors responsible for a major finding of this study -- that CTs who leave the Agency after giving it a reasonable chance in terms of time are brighter on the average than those who remain -- are open for speculation. Perhaps some of these very bright individuals, after undergoing extensive formal training representing much time and effort on their part, are disappointed at the level of duties or the responsibility afforded them in their initial jobs. If so, this could reflect a weakness in the management system within the Agency. On the other hand, it is possible that these young bright individuals are more likely to leave whichever organization they initially join than their slightly less able colleagues -- they realize that they are unusually attractive to many organizations and have little reluctance about trying somewhere else. A number of other possible explanations could be offered, but without further research these as well as the possible explorations just cited remain purely speculative. A thorough inquiry into the sources of job dissatisfaction and reasons for leaving the Agency together with data comparable to the data in this study from other organizations within government and private industry would be needed to fully understand this phenomenon.

Finally, it should be emphasized that while there are modest differences in the average intellectual abilities of those who leave the Agency and those who remain, these averages should not be interpreted to obscure the fact that many of the brightest CTs do not leave the Agency. The average

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test performance of the CTs who remain places them in the top half of Agency professionals and well within the top five per cent of the general population in intellectual ability. Clearly they are a talented group no matter what standards are used to judge their ability.

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